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SOVIET READINESS FOR WAR:
ASSESSING ONE OF THE MAJOR SOURCES
OF EAST-WEST INSTABILITY

R E P O R T

OF THE

DEFENSE POLICY PANEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

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(II)

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, December 5, 1988.

MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Subject: Report of Defense Policy Panel on Soviet Readiness for
War.

Attached is a report of the Defense Policy Panel that assesses
Soviet readiness for war as one of the major sources of East-West
instability.

LES ASPIN, *Chairman,*
Committee on Armed Services,

Approved for printing: Les Aspin.

(III)

PREFACE

During the second session of the 100th Congress, the Defense Policy Panel conducted hearings on September 8 and 14, 1988 on the readiness of Soviet forces and U.S. force planning. Testimony was solicited from the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense and outside Soviet experts. The witnesses included: Mr. Douglas MacEachin, Director of Soviet Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency; Mr. John J. Bird, Chief of Regional Issues Group, Central Intelligence Agency; Mr. John A. Woodworth, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy, Department of Defense; MG George L. Butler, Vice Director for Strategic Plans and Policy, Office of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff; Mr. Arthur A. Zuehlke, Jr., Special Assistant for Soviet Affairs, Director of Research, Defense Intelligence Agency; Dr. David Phillips, Chief, Special Projects Office, Defense Intelligence Agency; Dr. Graham H. Turbiville Jr., Senior Analyst for the Soviet Army Studies Office, Department of Defense; Dr. Jacob W. Kipp, Senior Analyst for the Soviet Army Studies Office, Department of Defense; Dr. Jeffrey Simon, Senior Fellow with the Mobilization Concepts Development Center, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University.

I. INTRODUCTION

Two of NATO's greatest concerns are that the Warsaw Pact could achieve a decisive military advantage over NATO by attacking out of a standing start without mobilizing and thus catching NATO completely unprepared, or by attacking after a short mobilization and taking advantage of NATO's failure to respond promptly to warning of Warsaw Pact preparations for war.

These concerns are at the heart of NATO planning. They lead to policies requiring the presence in West Germany of active-duty NATO forces at near-wartime readiness. They also lead directly to development of strategies such as Follow-On Forces Attack (FOFA), which is directed at disrupting Warsaw Pact ability to reinforce its forward divisions with forces from the Western Military Districts of the Soviet Union.

Recognizing the importance of these NATO concerns to the development of the U.S. defense program, the Defense Policy Panel of the House Armed Services Committee recently held hearings on the readiness of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces for mobilization and war. This Policy Panel report conveys the results of those hearings and begins the process of drawing conclusions for U.S. force planning.

The focus of the Defense Policy Panel's questions was on the following issues:

- What is the Warsaw Pact capability to conduct a standing start attack against NATO?
- What is the Warsaw Pact capability to obtain a decisive advantage after a mobilization?
- What are the implications of the answers to these questions for U.S. and NATO force planning?

II. THE STANDING START ATTACK

Surprise has long been a principle of war. History has sufficient modern examples of successful surprise attacks to demonstrate their potential. The surprise attack that has long worried many in NATO is a standing start attack, in which Warsaw Pact forces move directly out of their barracks and attack NATO with little or no warning. The forces available for a standing start, surprise attack against NATO are the ready forces of the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet forces in these two countries. These forces comprise some 36 divisions. They face about 24 $\frac{2}{3}$ in-place NATO divisions in the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ Table I shows the opposing forces that would be relevant in a standing start attack.

¹ Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces and the Conventional Balance in Europe, June 1988, p. 92-3. This CBO publication is used as the basic source of data for this entire paper.

TABLE 1

NATO—WARSAW PACT IN-PLACE FORCES

DIVISIONS ¹

NATO		Warsaw Pact	
United States.....	5½	Soviet Union	24
West Germany	12	East Germany	6
France.....	3	Czechoslovakia	6
United Kingdom	3	.....	.....
Belgium	¾	.....	.....
Netherlands.....	½	.....	.....
Canada.....	½	.....	.....
Total	24¾	.....	36
Total Armor Division Equivalents (ADEs) ²	22	.....	25

¹ Counts three separate brigades or armored cavalry regiments as one division.

² Armored Division Equivalents are a measure of combat capability designed to provide a fair comparison of the combat capabilities of a variety of different forces. These measures have been developed by the US Army Concept Analysis Agency and have been applied to this situation by the Congressional Budget Office.

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces and the Conventional Balance in Europe.

The table shows that the Pact has a 1.5:1 advantage in divisions but only a 1.1:1 advantage in ADEs (a measure designed to provide a fair comparison of the combat capability of forces that differ in size and mix of equipment). In either case, the Warsaw Pact advantage in in-place forces does not appear to be large enough to give a Soviet political or military leader confidence in the capability of Warsaw Pact forces to conduct a successful surprise attack against NATO.

The witnesses who testified before the Policy Panel agreed that Soviet leaders would consider a standing start attack to be the riskiest kind of attack they could conduct, particularly because they recognize the improvements in overall capability and readiness that NATO has made in recent years. Soviet leaders also recognize that, if this attack were defeated, it could cause the loss of Eastern Europe and all the Soviet forces in Germany. According to the Department of Defense, the Soviets "believe that both sides possess enormous military capabilities that cannot be rapidly destroyed, even in nuclear conditions; thus, they foresee prolonged theater campaigns." ²

In addition to Soviet concerns about the risk of a standing start attack, there are questions about the readiness of Warsaw Pact forces to conduct such an attack. Although these forces are maintained at the highest state of training, manning, equipment level and general alertness of any Warsaw Pact forces, they are not ready for an immediate attack without further preparation. As Mr. Phillip Karber of the BDM Corporation pointed out to the Defense Policy Panel, Soviet divisions have about 80 percent of their full-strength manpower during peacetime. Eighty percent of these soldiers are conscripts and one quarter of the conscripts are basic trainees with less than 6 months in the Army. Thus, the most ready divisions have only about 65 percent trained manpower.

² Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power, 1987, p. 64.

Manning levels in their combat service support units (units that provide food, fuel, ammunition, medical care, maintenance and transportation) are even lower.

Training is another area of low readiness for Warsaw Pact forces. Since basic training is conducted in units, many units are always at the most basic level of competence. Even individuals and units that have completed basic training do not train extensively for combat operations. For example, Soviet tank gunners are thought to fire fewer than 10 tank rounds per year while U.S. gunners fire 100 or more. In addition, ready Pact units spend about one half as much time in field exercises as their NATO counterparts.³

In contrast to Pact readiness, NATO combat forces along the German border are kept at relatively high readiness levels. This is particularly true for British, German and U.S. forces which are better trained and manned with active soldiers or with reservists, whose training and availability make them virtually the equivalent of active soldiers. Two U.S. Armored Cavalry Regiments and about two ADEs of other NATO forces are kept at high day-to-day readiness along the border at all times. NATO's biggest shortcoming is in the Dutch and Belgian sectors where relatively few forces are deployed in peacetime.

Dr. Kipp of the Office of Soviet Army Studies argued that we should view the Soviet forces in East Germany as a "classic covering force" intended to defend until the forces in the Western Military Districts can be brought forward. He argued that the failures of the Russian offensives against German and Austro-Hungarian forces in the initial period of World War I and of the German attack on the Soviet Union in World War II have led the Soviet General Staff to conclude that it is dangerous to risk everything on an initial success created by an unsupported surprise attack when they cannot be confident of success in subsequent operations.

On this basis, Warsaw Pact forces based in Eastern Europe do not appear to be configured for conducting a standing start attack. On a day-to-day basis these forces are capable of conducting an initial defense. But they are dependent on mobilization to fill out the divisions and support units with needed personnel and on time to conduct final training activities that are essential before they can consider conducting their "counter offensive." Mr. MacEachin, Director of Soviet Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency, put it this way, "They have postured their readiness to provide the force structure and mobilization base for their most likely contingency, while ensuring against their 'worst case'."

In other words, the Soviets apparently do not believe they can best achieve their goals by virtue of a surprise attack that defeats NATO in a very few days. Although NATO can never completely discount the possibility of a standing start surprise attack, the Soviets are apparently not preparing for such an attack. This Soviet view is a sign that NATO's efforts to improve readiness and to modernize have had an impact on Soviet perceptions of the mili-

³ Senator Carl Levin, *Beyond the Bean Count*, 1988, p. 44-50.

tary balance as well as having a real impact on NATO's ability to respond effectively to a surprise attack.

III. THE MOBILIZED ATTACK

More dangerous than a standing start attack is an attack by mobilized Warsaw Pact forces against unready NATO forces. Since neither side maintains its forces in a fully ready status, and both must mobilize before they are ready to perform their missions, it is important to investigate the ability of the Warsaw Pact to gain a mobilization advantage over NATO. A mobilization advantage means the ability of the Warsaw Pact to take its forces from their normal peacetime status and prepare them for war more rapidly than NATO can respond.

The immense size and ever increasing cost of modern military forces, and the general belief that no major war is likely in the near future, have led both NATO and Warsaw Pact nations to place significant portions of their total military capability in a reserve status. The use of reserve forces also allows these nations to limit the number of people that must be taken from the productive portion of the economy. In the United States, for example, the cost of operating reserve forces can be as low as 10-25 percent of the cost of operating active forces and full-time manning of reserve units can be limited to 5-10 percent of that of active forces.

The decision on the amount of a nation's forces to place in reserve status and on the resources to devote to maintaining their readiness for mobilization and war also depends on a nation's views of the mobilization readiness of its potential opponent. In other words, despite the economic advantages of maintaining a large reserve force, if a nation is concerned about a surprise attack, it must maintain a relatively large active force.

Since resources are limited and active forces cost much more than reserve forces, maintaining large active forces means the resources that can be devoted to reserve forces are reduced and the total size of a nation's forces is reduced. In Europe, for example, the concern for a short mobilization attack has led nations to limit the size of their reserve forces and, in many cases, has meant they are not planning to make effective use of the large number of pre-trained people that their conscript system makes available. In the United States, the concern for a short mobilization attack has led to the devotion of scarce resources to expensive strategic airlift forces designed to move U.S. forces rapidly to Europe.

In fact, there are two kinds of mobilization attacks for which NATO must prepare. The first is a short mobilization attack in which war begins after one to three weeks when neither side is fully prepared for war. The second is a full mobilization attack in which war begins after a month or more and both sides have made extensive preparations for war. Decisions on the allocation of resources to meet these two kinds of attacks can lead to significant differences in the forces that are produced.

A. THE SHORT MOBILIZATION ATTACK

NATO planners have traditionally focussed primarily on a short mobilization attack, in which the Warsaw Pact takes roughly one

to three weeks to mobilize most of its forces. An example of this kind of planning is found in Table 2 and Figure 1 below which are based on data taken from a recently declassified Department of Defense report on the military balance in NATO's Center Region.⁴ This report was written in 1979. It provides the DOD estimates of the balance in 1978 and their estimates of what the balance would be in 1984. Current estimates may differ in detail but these estimates generally reflect the traditional view of the overall balance and of Warsaw Pact readiness.

TABLE 2
NATO—WARSAW PACT SHORT MOBILIZATION ATTACK
DOD ESTIMATES IN ARMOR DIVISION EQUIVALENTS

NATO	1978	1984	Warsaw Pact	1978	1984
United States ¹	6.5	8.6	Soviet Union	50.5	60.0
West Germany	10.7	12.8	East Germany	5.0	5.5
United Kingdom	3.4	4.1	Czechoslovakia	7.0	8.5
France	3.0	3.5	Poland	8.3	9.9
Netherlands	2.7	3.1	.....	.....	.....
Belgium	1.9	2.0	.....	.....	.....
Denmark	2.0	2.0	.....	.....	.....
Canada .....	.2	.3	.....	.....	.....
Total	30.4	36.4	.....	70.8	83.9

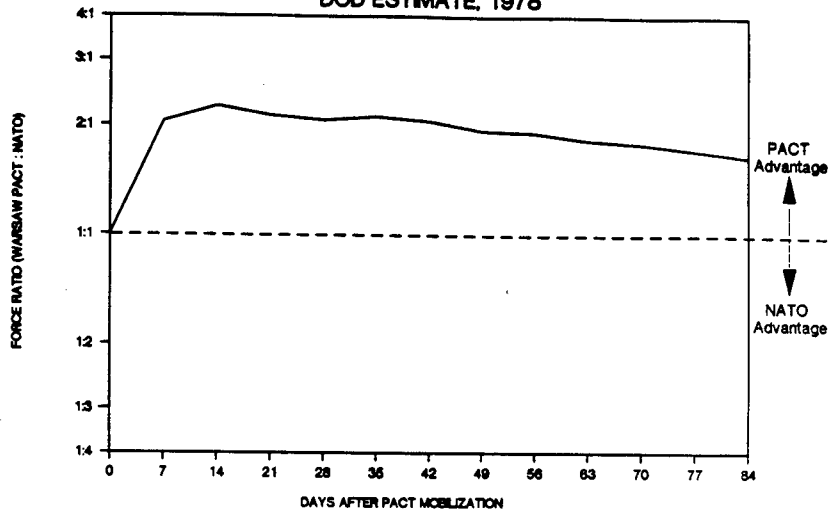
¹ In-Place U.S. forces only. Total U.S. Army ADEs were estimated to grow from 26.5 to 35.4.

SOURCE: Department of Defense, NATO Center Region Military Balance Study, 1978-1984. July 1979.

The table shows that the Department of Defense expected the military capability of both sides to grow over the six year period, but that the ratio of the in-place forces, as measured by ADEs, would not change appreciably from 2.3:1. The DOD report also lays out the time phased changes in NATO and Warsaw Pact force capability that result from mobilization. These changes are shown in Figure 1 which shows the force ratio changes based on the 1978 DOD estimates. It is important to note that Figure 1 assumes the Pact can have 40 divisions ready to attack by M+4, 58 divisions ready by M+8, 89 divisions ready by M+15 and 108 divisions by M+60. These DOD estimates assume the Pact will mobilize 4 days before NATO and will be ready to attack after a short two week mobilization with all its divisions in Eastern Europe and in the Western Military Districts of the Soviet Union.

⁴ Department of Defense, NATO Center Region Military Balance Study, 1978-1984. July 13, 1979.

Figure 1
WARSAW PACT : NATO FORCE RATIOS
DOD ESTIMATE, 1978



In contrast to these DOD estimates, the witnesses before the Policy Panel gave a different view of the readiness of Warsaw Pact forces. Table 3 is based on this testimony and data provided by the Congressional Budget Office. It shows the forces that would be likely to be available in a short mobilization attack. The table shows that NATO's short mobilization forces are essentially equal to those of the Warsaw Pact.

TABLE 3

NATO—WARSAW PACT IN-PLACE AND IMMEDIATE REINFORCING FORCES

DIVISIONS ¹

NATO	In place	Rein-force	Warsaw Pact	In place	Rein-force
United States	5 1/3	6	Soviet Union	24	7
West Germany	12	3 1/3	East Germany	6	4
France	3	12	Czechoslovakia	6	6
United Kingdom	3	2/3	Poland		8
Belgium	2/3	1 1/3			
Netherlands	1/3	3			
Canada	1/3				
Total	24 2/3	26 1/3		36	19
Total divisions	51				55
Total Armor division equivalents	34				34

¹ Counts three separate brigades or armored cavalry regiments as one division.

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces and the Conventional Balance in Europe.

There are two basic reasons why Tables 2 and 3 are so different. The first is that, thanks to improvements made, NATO forces are

now more ready and that more French forces are counted. The second is that it is now evident that Warsaw Pact forces are not as ready as the DoD assumed in 1979. In 1979 the DoD assumed that the Warsaw Pact could attack with 89 divisions in 15 days. A more realistic threat is only 55 divisions ready to attack in the first two to three weeks.

Table 3 includes a more reasonable number of European NATO active and reserve divisions, U.S. in-place forces, six U.S. active divisions with equipment stored in Europe, and all ready divisions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland and the Western Military Districts of the Soviet Union. The table does not include any U.S. divisions that do not have equipment stored in Europe or many of the European territorial and reserve forces that are not committed to NATO. Nor does it include any of the less ready divisions in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.

Forces were included or excluded based on their mobilization speeds and their capability to contribute effectively to combat operations—defensive NATO operations and offensive Pact operations. The mobilization speeds and combat capability of the forces of both sides is determined by their peacetime readiness, the location and training of their active and reserve personnel and the location and speed of movement of the units themselves.

Section II, on the standing start attack, describes the day-to-day readiness of Warsaw Pact divisions in Eastern Europe and demonstrates that they are not maintained at high readiness. Estimates of the time it would take for these forces to be ready for offensive combat vary significantly. During the hearings, Dr. Turbiville, of the Soviet Army Studies Office, referred to the lecture materials obtained from the Voroshilov General Staff Academy, the primary school for Soviet General Staff officers, and said that these Soviet papers, "seem to be postulating a preparatory period of at least some weeks." Based on this and classified testimony, the Defense Policy Panel concludes that even these most ready of Soviet combat forces would take at least a week before they were ready for offensive combat action. Pact logistic forces would take even longer.

Soviet forces in the Soviet Union are maintained at much lower readiness. There are 5 Category I ready divisions (three airborne) in the Western Military Districts that could likely reach the German Democratic Republic in the first 1-3 weeks of a mobilization. The next most ready Soviet heavy divisions are the 15 Category II divisions in the Western Military Districts. These divisions are only manned to levels of about 50-75 percent.

The majority of Soviet reinforcements are the 41 Category III divisions in the Western Military Districts and the Strategic Reserve. These divisions are manned at levels well below 50 percent with some as low as 10 percent. In both Category II and III divisions the active component consists of about 80 percent conscripts and at least 25 percent of these conscripts will still be in their basic training phase with less than 6 months in the Army. According to one source,⁵ the Category II divisions will be combat ready in about 30

⁵ Levin, op. cit., page 47.

days and Category III divisions will take even longer. Testimony provided the Policy Panel was generally consistent with these estimates. In other words, the Category II and III divisions would not be expected to be available for a short mobilization attack.

These divisions take so long to get ready for combat because they do so little training in peacetime and must train after mobilization. These training requirements result from the low peacetime readiness of most Soviet ground forces in the USSR and from their reserve system which is based on recalling about two million people who have completed their mandatory two year service within about the last 5 years. These reservists generally do not receive refresher training. When they are called up they will likely find themselves in an unfamiliar unit, operating equipment that they have not used for years, or that is different from the equipment on which they trained. They will not generally know their fellow soldiers. All of these factors significantly impede their unit effectiveness.

Soviet experience with mobilization also raises questions about their capabilities for a short mobilization attack. In Afghanistan, for example, the Soviets began preparations several months in advance, moved mobilized divisions into Afghanistan and spent time preparing them for combat inside Afghanistan before giving them a relatively static and generally defensive job. A recent Rand Corporation⁶ study has disclosed that these forces were suitable primarily for occupation duties and defense of fixed positions. According to the Rand study, the only forces that were successful in offensive, counter insurgency missions were the highly trained, elite airborne, air assault and reconnaissance units that are generally composed of volunteers or specially selected conscripts.

The performance of regular Soviet forces in Afghanistan raises questions about the ability of similar forces to operate effectively in an attack on Western Europe. While it is true that Soviet forces are trained for a war in Europe and that such a war would be very different from the war in Afghanistan, it would be no easier. Although Soviet motorized rifle divisions in Afghanistan did conduct several large scale, armored assaults on Mujahideen strongholds, these setpiece assaults cannot be compared to what would be required of these units in a war in Europe. These Afghan operations were characterized by their deliberate preparations and conduct, by their total control of the air and by the inability of the Mujahideen to face up to the heavy Soviet fires. None of these circumstances would exist in a short mobilization attack on NATO. The war in Europe would be at a much higher intensity, with higher rates of movement, and much higher casualties. While NATO soldiers may not be as fanatical as Mujahideen, they will be motivated to defend their homes and they are certainly better trained and equipped.

The witnesses confirmed these problems in Afghanistan and also commented on problems in Soviet preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in their activities relating to the Polish crisis in 1980. In all three cases the witnesses found reason to question seriously the capability of Soviet forces to reach an adequate

⁶ Alexander Alexiev, Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, The Rand Corporation, May 1988.

combat capability after a short mobilization. Dr. Turbiville mentioned that the invasion of Czechoslovakia, "was proceeded by a series of eight to twelve exercises in a period of several months before the Soviets actually went in." Although these exercises served the joint purposes of readying Soviet forces and their support, of exerting coercion, and of obscuring mobilization and deployment activities, it is clear that activities of this type were essential to Soviet preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Warsaw Pact logistic preparations would also require considerable time after mobilization. Soviet logistic units in Eastern Europe are manned at low levels and some units would have to be brought in from the Western Military Districts to support Soviet forces in Germany. In a short mobilization case, Soviet forces would be dependent on an essentially non-Soviet infrastructure for the westward movement of Soviet supplies and follow-on forces along a 1000 kilometer line of communications.⁷ East German, Czechoslovak and Polish logistic forces would also require time to prepare. Many units would have to obtain civilian trucks and other equipment. Vast stockpiles would have to be loaded and moved to the front. The three million metric tons of munitions the Pact has stockpiled in the theatre⁸ would have to be loaded and preparations made to carry much of it hundreds of kilometers into NATO territory to support the Pact penetration.

NATO's ground forces are generally more ready than Warsaw Pact ground forces. The preceding discussion of the standing start attack showed that NATO's standing forces were more ready than Pact standing forces. This is also the case with the forces available to NATO after a short mobilization. European NATO reserves are better organized and trained than Pact reserves. European reserves train with their units and many are assigned to the same units with which they served on active duty. U.S. combat forces coming from the United States in the early days of a mobilization are fully trained active forces. The United States exercises its mobilization and reinforcement capabilities every year while the Soviets seldom, if ever, exercise their mobilization and deployment system.

The location of reservists and of reserve units is also an important factor in the short mobilization calculation. This factor is generally in NATO's favor. Although Soviet forces in East Germany are closer to the border than Belgian or Dutch forces at home, Soviet reservists assigned to forces in Eastern Europe must come from the Soviet Union. Reinforcing units in Poland and the Western Military Districts must move a significant distance over a relatively unsophisticated transportation system.

Reinforcing NATO units and individuals, with the exception of those from North America, have a shorter distance to travel. In general, the readiness and location of European NATO reinforcing units and individuals means these units will be ready on the border in 2 to 7 days. This is as fast or faster than the most ready and nearest Warsaw Pact divisions can be ready to conduct sustained offensive operations.

⁷ Douglas A. Macgregor, "Conventional Force Reductions on German Soil" Parameters, December 1988.

⁸ Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power, 1988, p. 101.

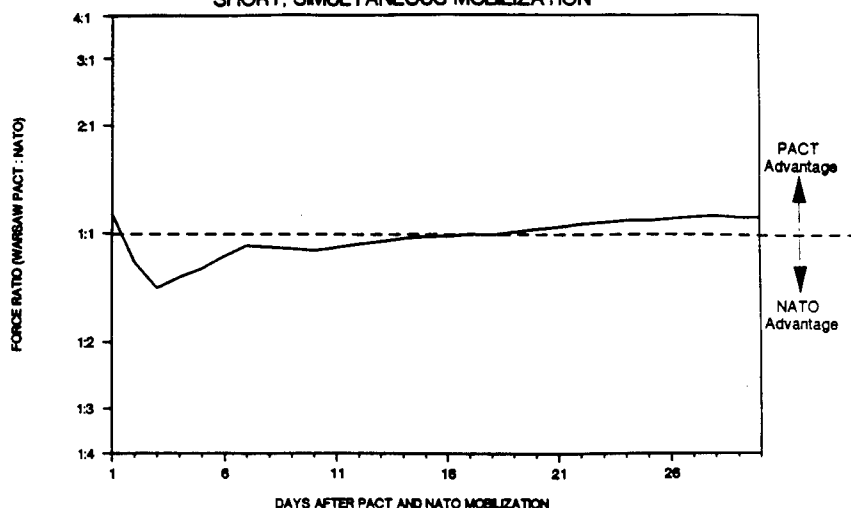
After the first week of mobilization, NATO reinforcements will come primarily from the United States. As part of the U.S. "Ten Divisions in Ten Days" commitment, six U.S. active divisions have most of their equipment stored in Europe and can be combat ready in Europe relatively quickly. Although their actual arrival time is uncertain, after almost 15 years of work on this reinforcement scheme, the recent completion of major storage facilities and the management improvements now under way will bring the U.S. closer to a capability to put these divisions in Europe in 10 days. These six divisions complete NATO's short mobilization build up.

After these six divisions, other active and reserve divisions will come by sea. Although the sea voyage will delay the arrival of these forces, there does not appear to be any reason to suspect they will take longer to arrive than the Category III Soviet divisions, which are less ready than the remaining U.S. active and reserve divisions.

The consequences of this view of NATO and Warsaw Pact mobilization capabilities are reflected in Figure 2. This figure is based upon the assumption that both sides mobilize at roughly the same time. It reflects the impact of NATO's high level of peace time readiness of in-place and reinforcing forces and of the Warsaw Pact's slight superiority in total forces. The figure shows that the Warsaw Pact advantage actually declines in the early days of a mobilization and that the Pact advantage is insignificant after 30 days.

Figure 2 does not reflect other aspects of NATO's short mobilization capability. For example, about 60 squadrons of U.S. aircraft will arrive in Europe before the six divisions, and much of NATO's barrier complex will be in place in the early days of a mobilization. These and other improvements in NATO's defense will further improve NATO's deterrent capability.

Figure 2
WARSAW PACT : NATO FORCE RATIOS
SHORT, SIMULTANEOUS MOBILIZATION



Since the capability of both sides at M-Day is uncertain, this graph starts at M+1 when both sides will have had time to begin the process of bringing their forces out of their peacetime training status and into a war-ready status. The actual capability of the forces at M-Day is directly dependent upon the political military situation in which M-Day occurs. If it occurs as part of a major political crisis, it is likely both sides will have taken pre-mobilization steps that will allow their M-Day and M+1 postures to be better than they would if the mobilization came out of the blue.

It is important to note that the force ratios in Figure 2 do not indicate that one level is more likely than another to lead to war. History is replete with examples of nations attacking even though they faced force ratios of less than 1:1. There are also examples of nations not attacking even though they had significant advantages. If both sides wish to avoid war, the danger of war appears to arise in a crisis when the possibility for misperception or mistake is high and when there are rapid changes or reversals in the relative balance of forces. The important point shown by Figure 2 is that the early days of a simultaneous mobilization do not show a significant increase in the Soviet M-Day advantage, nor do they show any significant reversals that could lead to a Soviet decision to attack NATO. In other words, if NATO mobilizes at about the same time as the Warsaw Pact, NATO can maintain and even increase the level of confidence that a stable force ratio creates.

There are two important caveats to this important conclusion. First, as all of the witnesses made clear, if Soviet leaders decide to start a war, the Warsaw Pact has a significant advantage in tanks and other weapons that give it a major offensive capability, particularly against the Northern Army Group where NATO is weakest. For example, within 100 kilometers of the border the Pact has a 2.5:1 advantage in tanks over the forces in NATO's Northern

Army Group.⁹ If the Pact were to attack successfully in the north before NATO forces in the region were prepared, the coherence of the overall NATO defense could be destroyed. As long as the Pact retains its offensive orientation and its force advantages, the situation in Europe will remain dangerous and potentially unstable in a crisis.

Second is the even more dangerous situation that arises if the Warsaw Pact obtains an advantage due to a delay in NATO mobilization. In this case the Warsaw Pact gains a significant advantage when it has time to ready its forces for an attack and NATO does not respond. The Pact advantage builds until NATO mobilizes. This is perhaps the most dangerous time because it is at this point that Pact leaders will be forced to choose either to attack instantly when their advantage is at its greatest or to defer an attack and watch their advantage decline as NATO mobilizes and makes other preparations for war.

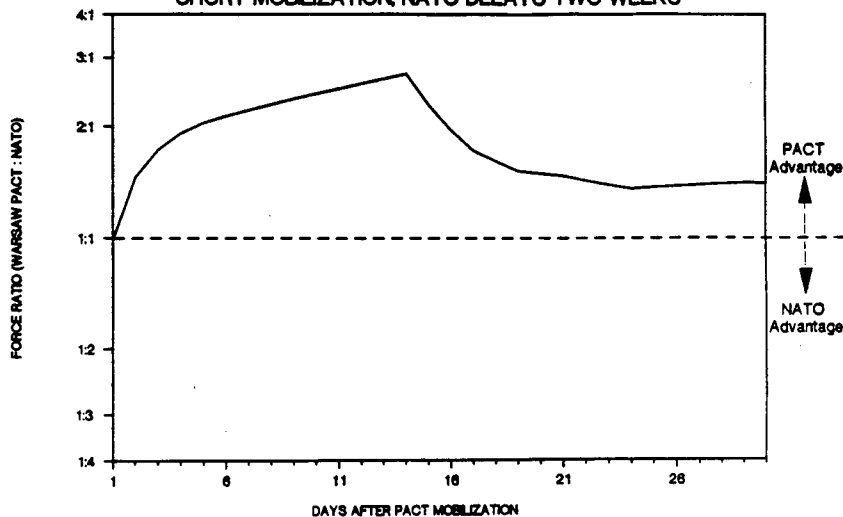
Figure 3 shows this problem in a scenario similar to that in Figure 2 except that the Pact has a two week mobilization advantage over NATO. After two weeks of mobilization the concentration of Pact forces near the border has allowed the Pact to gain an advantage of over 2.4:1. In the north the overall Pact advantage could approach 4:1,¹⁰ the tank advantage could be over 4:1, and the advantage in the area of a planned main attack could be much higher.¹¹ The instant NATO mobilizes that advantage begins to decline and is soon reduced to less than 1.5 to 1 in the theater. The temptation to Soviet leaders to attack is clear. If they attack at this point of greatest advantage, not only do they have a significant ground force advantage, but NATO will not have had time to implement its barrier plan, its forces will not have had time to reach their defensive positions or to prepare them for a good defense, the major U.S. air reinforcements will not have arrived, and NATO forces will be in a state of confusion normal to the first few days of any mobilization.

⁹ Levin, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰ CBO, op. cit., p. 32.

¹¹ Levin, op. cit., p. 12.

Figure 3
WARSAW PACT : NATO FORCE RATIOS
SHORT MOBILIZATION, NATO DELAYS TWO WEEKS



Since NATO is likely to obtain warning of Pact mobilization activities, even if the Alliance is unable to make a coordinated response, it is likely that some improvements in NATO's combat readiness will occur during this two week period even if NATO reserves are not called and the Rapid Reinforcement Plan is not implemented. Similarly, to assume that NATO does not respond for two weeks requires that the Pact not take every mobilization step they would likely take in a full scale mobilization. Accordingly, this graph reflects a build up of NATO's in-place defensive capability in the period before M+14 and a slightly lower build up of Pact capabilities during this period. Assuming zero NATO response and a full scale Pact mobilization would lead to Pact advantages of ten or twenty to one.

The Warsaw Pact could obtain this kind of a mobilization advantage if it mobilizes covertly or if NATO fails to make a prompt response to warning. The capability for a covert mobilization is dependent on the capability of NATO's intelligence system to detect a Soviet mobilization. While the highly classified nature of this subject makes it difficult to discuss in an unclassified paper, it is important to say that the members of the Defense Policy Panel looked carefully at this issue and concluded that a mobilization of the magnitude necessary for the Warsaw Pact to conduct an attack would be detected early and a timely warning would be given to NATO decision makers.

The much more likely way the Warsaw Pact could obtain a mobilization advantage is by a NATO failure to respond to warning. The real question for NATO is whether NATO decision makers would respond to warning and make a timely mobilization decision. This is a very difficult issue.

Some witnesses discussed the Soviet concern for surprise and deception and argued that NATO could not be confident of making a timely decision if the Warsaw Pact was successful in deceiving NATO as to its actions or its intentions. Despite the confidence of

the intelligence community that it can provide warning, these witnesses raised the question of whether it would be "actionable" warning. The National Defense University's Dr. Jeffrey Simon has just completed a book on this subject and warned:

The question is how credible will the warning be? Will it be credible in the sense that the national political authorities will be able to go to their publics and say, 'It is now necessary for us to initiate mobilization.' This means severe social and economic dislocation. It could bring down a government.

The members of the Policy Panel shared this concern for NATO's ability to make a timely mobilization decision. The Panel Members recognized the concerns of NATO political leaders that NATO mobilization actions could escalate a crisis and even lead to war. Paradoxically, they also recognized that the focus on planning for a short mobilization attack reflects the concerns of military planners that their civilian leaders will not make a prompt mobilization decision when they receive warning of a Warsaw Pact mobilization.

Thus, the short mobilization threat to NATO comes not only from the Warsaw Pact advantage in forces but also from the dangers of misperception and mistake that are found in any crisis, that could affect NATO's mobilization decision, and could lead to the Pact amassing a significant and perhaps decisive advantage. On the other hand, NATO can essentially match the Warsaw Pact buildup if it mobilizes at roughly the same time as the Pact. A simultaneous mobilization, therefore, can enhance deterrence and reduce Soviet incentives to attack. The greatest danger in a short mobilization case is the possibility that NATO will not respond to warning in a timely and appropriate way. Once NATO gets behind, it must choose between getting farther behind and taking dramatic steps that could cause the war it is trying to prevent.

B. THE FULL MOBILIZATION ATTACK

The Soviet experts who testified before the Policy Panel were consistent in their arguments that the risk-averse Soviet leaders would much prefer to wait until their forces were fully ready before any attack on NATO. Table 3 shows the opposing forces that would be relevant in a full mobilization attack that occurred after at least 30 days of mobilization by both sides. Table 3 shows that the Warsaw Pact ground force advantage is most significant in the full mobilization case when the Warsaw Pact has had time to bring all its forces to bear and when those forces have had time to prepare more fully for war.

TABLE 3

NATO—WARSAW PACT FULL MOBILIZATION FORCES

DIVISIONS ¹

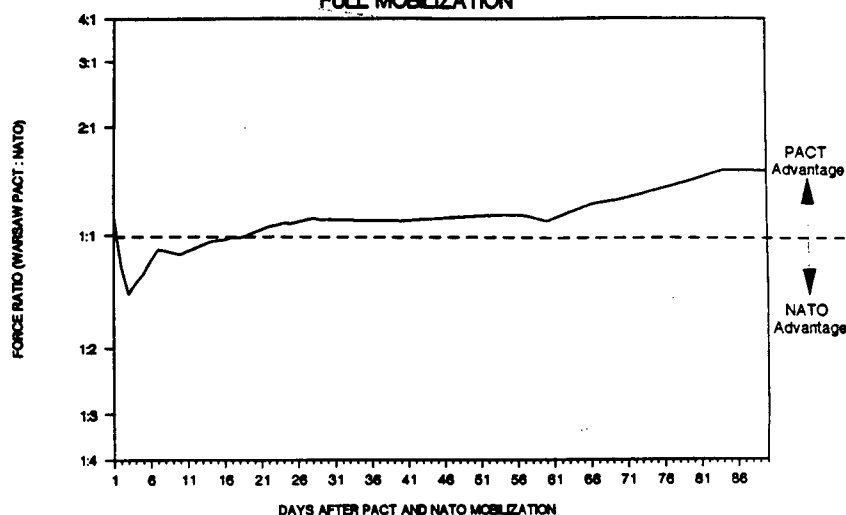
NATO		Warsaw Pact	
United States.....	30 1/3	Soviet Union.....	90
West Germany.....	15 1/3	East Germany.....	10
France.....	15	Czechoslovakia.....	10
United Kingdom.....	3 3/4	Poland.....	15
Belgium.....	2		
Netherlands.....	3 3/4		
Canada.....	1/3		
Total.....	72		125
Total Armor Division Equivalents.....	49		77

¹ Counts three separate brigades or armored cavalry regiments as one division.

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces and the Conventional Balance in Europe.

The table shows that, as long as NATO does not get behind in a mobilization race, the Warsaw Pact obtains its greatest advantage after a full mobilization. Figure 4 shows how this advantage grows over time.

Figure 4
WARSAW PACT : NATO FORCE RATIOS
FULL MOBILIZATION



The concept of an attack after a full mobilization of Warsaw Pact forces is consistent with Soviet doctrine as Dr. Kipp described it:

In regard to Soviet planning for operations against NATO, forward-based tactical units and operational formations are deployed and maintained in peacetime at levels of strength and operational readiness adequate to under-

take initial operations immediately, while lower strength/less ready forces are to be rapidly mobilized and deployed to fill-out or reinforce operational groupings early in a conflict. These forces are to be strong enough to repel an enemy surprise attack, to cover on-going operational deployment, and to rapidly undertake offensive operations on a theater-strategic scale.

The Department of Defense publication, "Soviet Military Power," makes a similar point about the Soviet concern for the need to provide time to mobilize forces before conducting a major attack on NATO:

Recent Soviet writings reflect concern that they may be unable to initiate offensive operations immediately. One factor highlighted is the growing importance of initial defensive operations. The contest for early successes and momentum may require the Soviet Union and its allies to wage defensive operations to defeat the enemy's initial strikes, retain or gain the initiative, and eventually deploy the forces necessary to conduct a war-winning theater offensive.

Another related doctrinal change has been an increasing Soviet concern that they may no longer be able to defeat an opponent totally in a short, rapid, offensive campaign lasting several weeks. Rather, a future war may be a succession of operations and campaigns conducted over an extended period, due, in part, to the enormous resources of present-day coalitions. Recent conflicts in the Middle East and South Atlantic are cited as indicative of the enormous losses in personnel and equipment that can be expected and underline the growing importance of strategic reserves.¹²

These Soviet views of the nature of a future war strengthen the argument that, whatever their desires for a rapid attack, the Soviet leadership will prefer to wait until their forces are ready before initiating a war with NATO. The Soviet General Staff clearly recognizes that the training and other preparation of partially ready and unready divisions and the preparation of logistic units and stockpiles are essential before they attempt an attack that is intended to penetrate hundreds of kilometers deep into NATO territory and that may not be successful for an extended period of time.

The Soviet concept of surprise is also consistent with the concept of a fully mobilized attack. Although the Soviets believe surprise is essential for success in war, they do not necessarily mean the kind of surprise that is implicit in a standing start or short mobilization attack. According to Dr. Kipp, the Warsaw Pact is primarily concerned about operational surprise—where they attack, how they attack, who they attack. They would attempt to achieve strategic surprise involving a standing start or short mobilization attack only in the direst circumstances when they had concluded that NATO was about to attack them.

¹² DoD, Soviet Military Power, 1988, p. 73-4.

The most important point about the full mobilization attack is that it occurs when the large Warsaw Pact forces are most ready and can take best advantage of their numerical advantage. It is at this point that they can also take best advantage of the possibilities of operational surprise and of their offensive doctrine.

IV. DEFENSE POLICY PANEL CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the Defense Policy Panel concludes:

1. The Warsaw Pact has a conventional force advantage over NATO. The Pact continues to maintain and even improve its advantages, particularly in the northern parts of Germany. But our judgment about whether the greatest threat from the Pact comes in the immediate run, the short run, or the long run has changed.

2. Soviet leaders would consider a standing start attack to be the riskiest kind of attack they could conduct, particularly because they recognize the improvements in overall capability and readiness that NATO has made in recent years. Therefore, the Committee believes that the probability of a Warsaw Pact standing start attack against NATO has been reduced.

3. Although NATO forces are outnumbered by the Warsaw Pact, NATO can prevent the Pact from obtaining a decisive advantage in a short mobilization if NATO responds promptly to Pact mobilization. The greatest danger in a short mobilization case is the possibility that NATO will not respond to warning in a timely and appropriate way and that the Warsaw Pact will obtain a potentially decisive advantage, particularly against NATO's forces in the north.

4. The Warsaw Pact ground force advantage is most significant in the full mobilization case when the Pact has had time to bring all its forces to bear and when those forces have had time to prepare more fully for war. NATO must expand its planning to take more account of the threat of an attack that comes after a longer mobilization and when NATO has had longer warning.

5. A broader planning focus that fully includes the implications of a short warning attack, of a full mobilization attack and of the problems of responding to warning has important implications. For example:

- A. The Committee believes more emphasis should be placed on achieving "actionable" warning of a Warsaw Pact mobilization. "Actionable" warning is warning that the European publics will find convincing enough to allow their governments to take necessary mobilization steps. Key elements here are improvements in intelligence dissemination and arms control measures.

- B. The Committee believes that better understanding of the short mobilization constraints on the Warsaw Pact and of the full mobilization threat to NATO should lead to reconsiderations of some of our force structure decisions. A better use of European ground force reserves is an example and one of several possibilities.

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